

Letter from Taizé

BIMONTHLY 3.50 FF

August - September 1989 / 4

EUROPEAN
MEETING OF
YOUNG ADULTS
28 Dec 89 - 2 Jan 90

POLAND
Wrocław

T A I Z É

Property of see pages 2 and 3
Graduate Theological Union

AUG 31 1989

Almost two months ago, the East-West Meeting in Hungary was held. It took place in Pécs for four days, with the final day in Budapest. What remains in the hearts of those who took part is the surprise and happiness of the Hungarians that people came in such great numbers, and from so many countries, to visit them and to pray with them. Out of a total of 20,000 participants, the largest number after the Hungarians were the Polish (2,600), the Czechoslovakians (1,600), the East Germans (1,000) and the Yugoslavians, but many young people from Western Europe also came for the meeting.

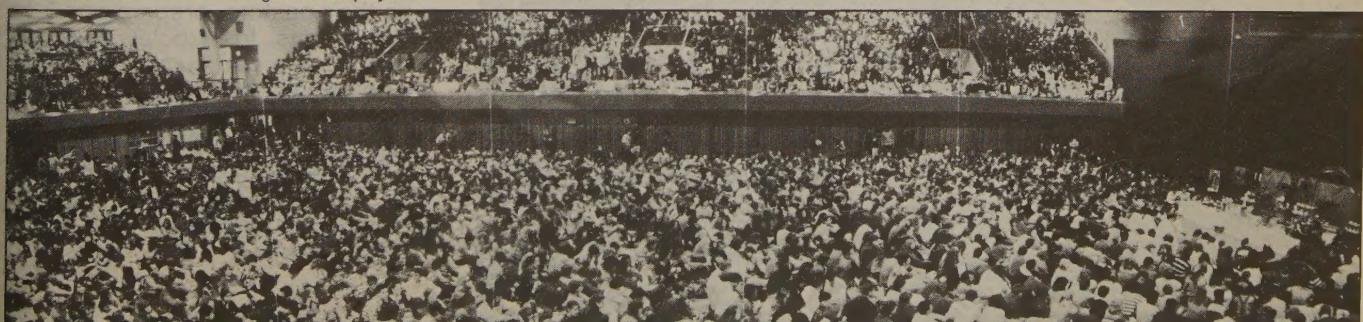
In more than one respect this meeting was a first for the Hungarians. In the first place, because of the large number of people who came: the participants represented ten percent of the population of Pécs, and so they were not unnoticed! It was the first time that such a celebration, bringing together young people from Eastern and Western Europe, could be prepared and organized by Christians of different denominations. During the final common prayer, in the basilica of Saint Stephen in Budapest, the leaders of the three largest denominations of the country were present, the cardinal and the Reformed and Lutheran bishops.

The organization of special trains and coaches, the presence of the national television network, the collaboration with the city government which had offered the use of schools for the welcome and the sports stadium as a place of prayer, were signs that the meeting was an event that had an impact far beyond the visible borders of the Church. "The sympathy of so many, even non-Christians, became evident during the meeting," said a young man from Pécs. And many of the older people brought to mind Simeon welcoming the child Jesus when they explained, "We have waited so long for this day, for us, for our children and for our grandchildren. And now we have seen it with our own eyes!"

The welcome was broadened to include fifty villages, and it was a festival for each family that offered hospitality. Not only were the chickens killed for a feast, but many people spent the night with neighbours so that they could welcome the guests by giving their own beds. Someone from outside Pécs had this to say:

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The covered stadium in Pécs during one of the prayers.



European meeting in Poland: Wrocław

As soon as the news was announced that the next European meeting would be held in Poland, the young people of Wrocław expressed their great joy at hosting it:

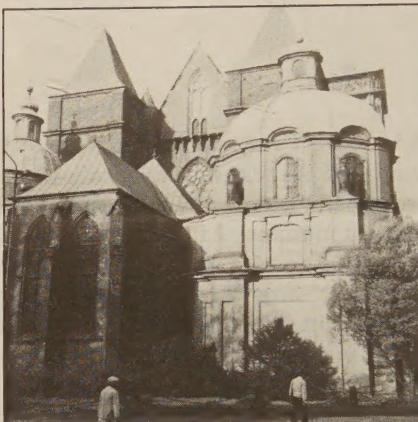
"It's unbelievable! We would never have imagined that such a thing could happen! How can our city be compared to the great metropolises with millions of inhabitants? But it will be easy to find families to offer hospitality to everyone, and fortunately we have many large churches and a large hall for the prayers."

The outburst of joy was followed by a question: What does this mean for us? Many of us have already taken part in European meetings. We can imagine our churches filled with young people from throughout Europe, the prayer that will lead us to the living springs of faith, the sharing in our parishes and families...

As in Rome, London and Paris we are going to look for ways of building trust. We know that we shall receive a lot. But we are happy too that the meeting will take place just now, when our country is undergoing important changes.

The necessity of preparing for the meeting will lead us to begin a reflection about ourselves. That is vital so that we can better discern what is happening and how we can participate as Christians.

The cathedral.



We have had an intense experience of human solidarity in the midst of trial; now that the context is more favorable, we would like to continue in a common creation. The meeting will be an occasion to begin right away.

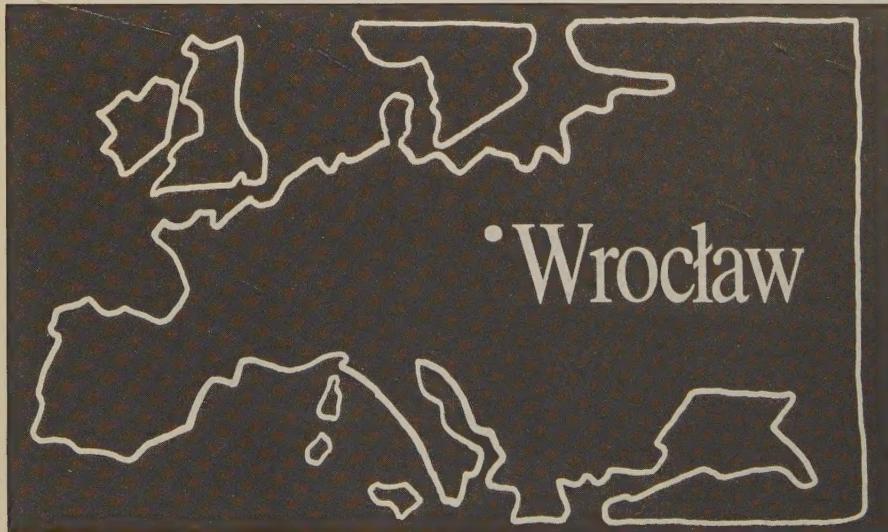
The announcement of the meeting also comes at a time when important changes are occurring in the life of the Church. As a result of past experiences these changes, even if they seem for the first time to be far-reaching, are being welcomed with prudence, without the enthusiasm that accompanied the events of almost ten years ago.

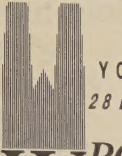
When we think of the European meeting, even if we are a bit worried about the practical questions involved with offering hospitality to so many people, these are quickly put into perspective when we realize all that will become possible through the meeting. What reassures us is that this welcome will take place in our Church, in parishes, in families. That is where we feel at home, because for us the Church has always been a space of freedom and of creativity.

Our churches are first of all places of prayer. They are open the whole day long; many people drop in to pray. In the parishes, there are five or six services each weekday, and up to fourteen on Sundays. People also meet in prayer groups. In several of our parishes, we meet once a week for a meditative prayer with the songs of Taizé and times of silence.

In the life of the Church, much space is given to the teaching of the catechism and the religious training of the young. In Wrocław, for example, there are about 600 young adults, lay people, who are taking a theology course on the university level, in the evenings, after studying or working all day. Since there has been no religious education in the schools, such education takes place in the parishes, where up to 2000 children are taught each week. The parishes also organize pastoral activities with different social groups, students, workers, artists, etc.

Pilgrimages have become another important element of the life of the Church. The young people are the ones who have rediscovered this age-old tradition and renewed it by their faith; they are the ones who, with their pastors, prepare and lead these events. In Wrocław, two pilgrimages are particularly important for us: in October we go on foot to Trzebnica to the tomb of Saint Hedwig, the patron of Silesia; in August there is the great nine-day pilgrimage to Częstochowa. Several thousand young people take part in it each year.





EUROPEAN
MEETING OF
YOUNG ADULTS
28 Dec 89 - 2 Jan 90

WROCŁAW POLAND

T A I Z É

Dates: Arrive Thursday morning, 28 December 1989 between 7am and 12 noon. Depart mid-afternoon, Tuesday 2 January 1990.

Accommodation: with families, communities and in church halls. Simple conditions. Bring sleeping-bag and lightweight mattress.

General Programme: We will be welcomed by families and local church communities throughout the city. In each neighbourhood there will be a morning prayer, then a time for meetings in small groups and visits to people with an involvement in the local area. Each day there will be two common prayers for everyone in city-centre churches; in the afternoon, workshops on different themes.

17 to 29 year olds: three different ways of taking part:
— the main group: participation in the life of the parishes of the city.

— the silence group (has its own separate accommodation).

→ while still participating in the life of the parishes, helping with practical work for the meeting, or "animation", or music for the common prayers. To do this, arrive, if possible, on December 26 between 8am and 4pm. It is not possible to arrive on Dec. 27.

15 & 16 year olds can only take part if accompanied by a group leader over 20 who stays with them, and all participate in the main group (see above) from 28 December on (do not arrive before).

Adults over 30 all participate in the main group (see above) from 28 December on (do not arrive before). Those who cannot stay in the same simple conditions as the young people and need a "real bed" indicate this on their registration form. Those who are accompanying a group of young people are welcome to stay with them if they will accept the same simple accommodation.

Families with children, and people with a disability who need special accommodation should register directly to Taizé — best by telephone in October or November — to arrange suitable accommodation.

Your contribution to cost covers all meals during the meeting and a public transport pass. An estimate of the contribution expected from each participant will be given in later editions of the Letter from Taizé.

Visa: Special arrangements may be made for the meeting. Later editions of the Letter from Taizé will explain what it is necessary to do to obtain a visa for Poland.

Travel

— from Britain: Group travel by coach or train from London linking up with a special train for Wroclaw starting in Cologne. Book well in advance, the deadline for booking on the special train is likely to be end-November. Departure from London, evening 26th December. The first, very approximate, estimate of cost is £110 return from London. Details from: St Peter's Coaches, 87a Rushey Green, LONDON SE6 2BC. Tel: 01 698 9145 Fax: 01 697 2466 Telex: 268506.

Those wanting to arrive in Wrocław on December 26th to help, can contact Taizé directly to discuss their travel plans.
— from other countries: write to Taizé for the address of the person who is arranging group travel from your country.

Send in your registration form by 1 December at the latest. Full details about the European Meeting will be sent in November to anyone who has already registered. See separate paper for list of contact people in Britain. Address for registration ONLY for those who live outside Britain, all families with children, and those who have special accommodation needs: European Meeting, Taizé Community, 71250 CLUNY France Tel: 85.50.18.18.

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In the same spirit of pilgrimage we have also taken part in the meetings of Taizé in different cities of Europe, in Madras, and recently in Pécs. The fruits of these meetings are often seen in the local involvements of each of us: in a student parish, some young people organize a weekly time of prayer and of reflection on the Bible; in other parishes, families meet regularly to pray together and to talk about their problems; in a university residence, people meet once a week for a meal in silence and for sharing; others are trying to set up a meeting-place for families with handicapped children...

All these activities do not make us forget that in our city so many people, old and young, are alone and find it hard to discover a meaning in their life; they become disengaged and indifferent.

So many young adults our age, overwhelmed by the troubles of daily life, see emigration as the only answer. That is why we are happy about the meeting, its preparation and its follow-up; perhaps it will help us to get to know them and to rediscover with them the gifts and the values of our traditions, and to understand why it is worthwhile to stay here and to get involved.

This is the experience we have had each time we went to Taizé or to the European meetings. Here we are counting a lot on those who will come for the meeting. So often, in other cities, we have been impressed by the commitments of young people on behalf of those who suffer.

That is why we are hoping that young adults from throughout Europe will be able to come, from the West and from the East, so that in prayer and sharing we will be able to discover our deepest roots and aspirations." □

European Meeting Registration Form. Send in by December 1st
either to a contact person (Britain) or (if you live outside Britain) to Taizé.

Tel : _____ / Occupation : _____ Age : _____

Circle "Yes" or "No" or complete where necessary.

- I am coming with a group from the town of
led by
 - For adults (over 30 years) and those who cannot sleep on the floor:
I need a bed: yes / no : If "yes", say whether you are (please circle):
woman man couple family with ... children disabled person with helper
 - I will arrive on 28th December: yes / no (arrival between 7am and 12pm)
 - I will arrive on 26th December (17-30 year olds only): yes / no
to help with (please circle): animation / work / music team.
 - N.B. If, for any reason, you are arranging your own accommodation in Wroclaw,
please send us the address and, if possible, the name of the parish where you will stay.
 - I would like more registration forms (photocopy your own if possible).

«Lord, teach us to pray»

The following article is the continuation of the first three texts based on the Bible introductions given in Taizé last summer on the Lord's Prayer.

Your will be done

The link between this petition of the Lord's Prayer and the previous one can be understood by looking at Isaiah 2,2-4: the Reign of God, the new world order, is present where human beings live according to the will of God.

“Many peoples will come and say, «Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.»... He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.” (Isa 2,2-4).

The Bible speaks of God's will in two slightly different ways, one more active and the other more passive. First of all, there is the expression “doing the will of God” (e.g. Ps 40,8; 119,112; 143,10). In Hebrew, that means literally: doing what is pleasing to God, doing what makes God happy. This should remind us that it is not a matter of obeying an abstract law but of accepting the consequences of a personal relationship. If we love someone, we try to do what pleases them; we want them to be happy.

But we can also turn the image around. If God loves us, his happiness is for us to discover the fullness of life, for us to be happy, not superficially but by becoming truly ourselves. And this leads us to the second meaning of the expression “the will of God”. It refers to the great overarching plan or project of God for the entire universe and for the whole human race (cf. Eph 1,9-10).

Using the expression “God's plan” is a way of saying that God has created us for something. The existence of the universe and the life of each one of us has a meaning intended by God in his goodness. What happens to us and what we do are not a matter of indifference to God. God created us to enter into communion with himself. But the notion of “God's plan” would mislead us if we saw it as something fully laid out ahead of time, a kind of book where everything is written down in advance and where all we have to do is follow blindly.

A human comparison can help us here. Parents who truly love their children have expectations for them. They want their children to develop their abilities to the fullest extent possible; what their children do is not all the same to them. And yet, loving parents do not attempt to force their children to act in a certain way; they want them to use their gifts freely and so become mature persons.

This is even truer for God. God desires our happiness. But the difference between God and human parents is that God is the one who has placed these gifts in us, and among these gifts one of the greatest is freedom. God's plan is not a shackle that restricts our freedom. It is a call to use our freedom fully to become more and more someone in God's image, a person able to love and to serve others. God's will can never be considered apart from his love. It is at the service of this love; it is self-giving.

The fact that God's will does not crush our human wills but rather frees them can seem a paradox if we remain on a theoretical level. The example of Jesus, especially in John's Gospel, helps us understand that, in practice, no contradiction exists. On the one hand, Jesus says that he has come not to do his own will but the will of the Father; he does nothing on his own (cf. John 5,19.30; 8,27.42b; 12,49).

On the other hand, Jesus is the freest of all human beings; the Father always listens to him (John 11,42) and has placed all things in his hands (cf. John 13,3; 5,20-22.26-27). This mystery, of the Son's freedom that expresses itself in obedience to the Father's will, is also shown in the words of Jesus: “My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work” (John 4,34). For Jesus, God's will is not something that oppresses him or takes away his freedom; it is a source of life and energy, a nourishment.

This is true even in the most difficult hour of Jesus' life, in Gethsemani (Mark 14,32-42). There, he experiences all the horror and the power of evil, and still he prays, “Father, not what I want, but what you want.” It is of the utmost importance to realize that we are not dealing here with a kind of fatalism, of a forced consentment “because there is no other alternative,” but rather of an act of trust in the depth of the night. Jesus knows that God is his loving “Abba” who desires what is best for him and for the world, despite appearances to the contrary. His prayer is an attempt to discern, behind those appearances, the victory of love and to conform his life to this. And trust in God is the only road that makes this discernment possible.

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Johannine hours

Hosea 11.1-9

Johannine hours are suggested as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer, in the midst of our life at home. During the course of the day (if possible, two days in the same week) take a couple of hours to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, the group (3 to 10 people) meet together to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

Eight centuries before Christ, the prophet Hosea grasped the absolute nature of God's love. He understood that God loves with a love which will not be stopped even if it meets with a refusal.

By freeing his people from slavery in Egypt, God showed his love. Then he draws close like a father or mother "bending down to feed them" (v. 4). God cannot bear with the pain of seeing the distress of his people who are stricken by violence. Instead of turning to him, they cling to their refusal as a person electrocuted grasps the electric wire that endangers their life and cannot let go.

Nothing hurts so much as being forgotten by those one loves. With human beings, this pain easily turns into anger and desire for vengeance. But when God is rejected and forgotten, his searing pain does not become inflamed with anger but with compassion. "For, says God, I am God and not man, I am the Holy One among you." The holiness of God is that love which never says: I've had enough. The holiness of God's love is above his freedom. His love is so strong that he cannot cease to love.

What touches me the most about the love God has for us?

How can we respond to God who waits for us always, even when he is rejected?

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.

1 Fri Ps 119.102-104
Mk 8.27-33

Paul writes: Overburdened to the point of despair, we learnt to rely, not on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead to life. **2 Co 1.8-11**

2 Sat Is 56.1-7
2 Co 1.18-22

Jesus said: If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let them renounce themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

Mk 8.34-37

3 SUN Ws 3.17,29
Heb 12.18-19,22-24

Jesus said: When you have a dinner, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind, and you will be blessed, for they have no means to repay you. **Lk 14.1,7-14**

4 Mon 2 Co 2.14-17
Mk 9.1-8

The Lord says: My home is a high and holy place, but I am also with the humble and contrite to revive their spirit.

Is 57.14-15

5 Tue Is 57.18-19
2 Co 3.1-3

A man said to Jesus: I believe! Help my lack of faith. **Mk 9.17-29**

6 Wed Is 58.5-8
Mk 9.30-32

God has made us able to serve a new covenant, one which is not of written letters but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

2 Co 3.5-8

7 Thu Is 58.9b-11
2 Co 3.16-18

Jesus said to his disciples: If anyone wants to be first, they must make themselves last of all and servant of all.

Mk 9.33-37

8 Fri Jdt 13.18b-19
Rv 21.3b

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means "God-with-us".

Mt 1.18-23

9 Sat Ws 9.13-18
Phm 9-10,12-17

We carry the treasure of God's glory in earthen vessels so that it may be quite clear that the radiance comes from God, not from us.

2 Co 4.6-12

10 SUN Ws 9.13-18
Phm 9-10,12-17

Jesus said: Anyone who comes to me without preferring me to his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes and his own life too, cannot be my disciple.

Lk 14.25-33

Meditating on the Word

September

21 Thu

Ws 3.9

Ep 4.11-13

St MATTHEW

As he walked, Jesus saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, "Follow me". And he got up and followed him.

Mt 9.9-13

22 Fri

2 Co 7.5-7

Mk 12.28-34

Your promise is well tested, Lord, and your servant bids it dear. Though I am lowly and scorned, I do not forget your will.

Ps 119.140-144

23 Sat

Ps 131.1-3

2 Co 8.1-5

Jesus saw a poor widow put two small coins into the temple treasury and, calling his disciples, he said, "In truth I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all the others, for they all gave out of their wealth, but she has put in everything she possessed."

Mk 12.41-44

24 SUN

Am 8.4-7

Lk 16.1-13

There is only one God, and there is only one mediator between God and humanity, Christ Jesus, himself a human being, who gave himself for all.

1 Tm 2.1-8

25 Mon

2 Co 8.7-9

Mk 13.9-11,13

The Lord makes of his people his wife and says of her: I will draw her to myself, I will lead her into the desert and speak to her heart.

Hos 2.16-22

26 Tue

Hos 6.1-2

2 Co 8.13-15

Jesus said: Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Mk 13.26-31

27 Wed

2 Co 9.6-9

Mk 13.33-37

Let us strive to know the Lord; that he will come is as certain as the dawn. He will come to us like the rain of springtime upon the earth.

Hos 6.3-6

28 Thu

Hos 10.12

2 Co 9.10-11,15

Jesus sent out the twelve, saying: Proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is close at hand. Freely you have received, freely give.

Mt 10.1-10

29 Fri

2 Co 10.12-18

Mt 10.11-13,16

I am awake before dawn and cry to you for help, Lord. I put my hope in your word. My eyes stay open through the watches of the night to ponder your promise.

Ps 119.147-151

30 Sat

2 Co 11.21-31

Mt 10.24-27

The Lord says: While my people was still young, I loved them. I guided them with ties of human kindness and love.

Hos 11.1-4

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.

Meditating on the Word

1 SUN 1 Tm 6.11-16
Lk 16.19-31

Happy are they whose trust is in God, who gives justice to the oppressed and lifts up those who are bowed down. Ps 146.1-10

2 Mon Hos 11.7-9
Mt 10.37-42

Paul writes: God said to me: My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. 2 Co 12.7-10

3 Tue 2 Co 13.4
Mt 11.1-6

The Lord says: I will cure my people of their disloyalty, I shall love them with all my heart. Hos 14.2-5a

4 Wed Hos 14.6-9
2 Co 13.7-10

Jesus said of John the Baptist: He is the one of whom scripture says: Look, I am going to send my messenger before you to prepare your way. Mt 11.7-15

5 Thu Jl 2.21-23
Mt 11.16-19

Paul writes: We wish you joy. Aim for perfection; encourage one another; be of one mind and live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. 2 Co 13.11-13

6 Fri Ps 119.169-176
Col 1.24-29

Jesus said: I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for having revealed to little children what you have hidden from the learned and clever. Mt 11.25-27

7 Sat Jl 4.15-16
Col 2.1-5

Jesus said: Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Mt 11.28-30

8 SUN Hab 1.2-3, 2.2-4
Lk 17.5-10

Paul writes to Timothy: With the help of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, keep safe the good deposit of faith given to you. 2 Tm 1.6-8,13-14

9 Mon Am 5.4,14-15
Col 2.6-8

Jesus said: It is mercy that pleases me, not sacrifice. Mt 12.1-8

10 Tue Am 5.22-24
Mt 12.9-14

You were dead because of your sins, but God has raised you up with Christ. He has forgiven us all our sins. Col 2.9-13

October

Johannine hours

Mark 8.27-30

21 Sat Mi 7.18-20
Rm 2.1-4,14-15a
Jesus said: The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field that someone has found; he hides it again, and in his joy sells everything he has and buys that field. Mt 13.44-46,51-52

22 SUN Ex 17.8-13 2 Tm 3.14-42
Lk 18.1-8
I lift my eyes to the hills: where is my hope to come from? My help comes from the Lord, who made both heaven and earth. Ps 121

23 Mon Rm 4.1-8
Mt 13.53-58
The Lord says: I shall give all peoples pure lips so that all may call on the name of the Lord. Zp 3.11-13

24 Tue Rm 4.16-17
Mt 14.13-21
Your God is with you. He will quiet you with his love, he will dance with joy for you. Zp 3.14-18

25 Wed Zp 3.19-20
Mt 14.22-33
Our hope will not let us down, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. Rm 5.1-5

26 Thu Hab 1.13,2.1-4a
Mt 15.1-9
While we were still powerless, at the time chosen by God, Christ died for those who were without God. Rm 5.6-8

27 Fri Rm 5.15-21
Mt 15.29-31
The Lord is better than a fortress in time of trouble. He recognizes those who trust in him, even when the flood rushes on. Na 1.7-8a

28 Sat Hg 2.4-5
Rm 6.4-5
Jesus asked his disciples: "Who do people say I am?" "Some say John the Baptist," they answered, "some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But you," he said, "who do you say I am?" Peter spoke up and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Mt 16.13-20

29 SUN Si 35.12,18
2 Tm 4.6-8,16-18
In a parable, Jesus said that the one who prayed saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner", went home forgiven. Lk 18.9-14

30 Mon Rm 6.8-11
Mt 16.21-28
Moses prayed to God saying: Remember your words to your people: "If you return to me and practise my commandments, then, even if you are dispersed to the farthest corners of the earth, I shall gather you and bring you back to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my name." Ne 1.4-10

31 Tue Rm 6.22-23
Mt 17.14-20
Do not be sad or afflicted: God's joy is your strength. Ne 8.3,8-10

Johannine hours are suggested as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer, in the midst of our life at home. During the course of the day (if possible, two days in the same week) take a couple of hours to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, the group (3 to 10 people) meet together to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

In the Gospel, Christ often asks questions. He asks, "Why are you afraid?" (Mk 4.40) or, when many forsake him, he asks the apostles, "Do you want to leave me too?" (Jn 6.67). Later, he asks Peter, "Do you love me?" (Jn 21.15). At this decisive moment of his life on earth, when it will become clear if at least his disciples will recognize him, Jesus does not say who he is, but once again asks a question.

There lies one of the mysteries of the person of Christ: he relinquishes himself to such an extent, he becomes so humble and poor that the revelation of his identity does not happen by an affirmation, but by questions which call forth a free response from human beings. As he asks, both by his life and his words, the question: "Who am I for you?", Christ gives himself over to humanity. He takes the risk of there being very different opinions about him, but for whoever turns to him and recognizes him, he is the radiant reflection of God.

What question is Christ asking me today in the depths of my heart?

How can I find the courage to reply, not with something that is just one opinion among others about Christ, but with a response that commits my life?



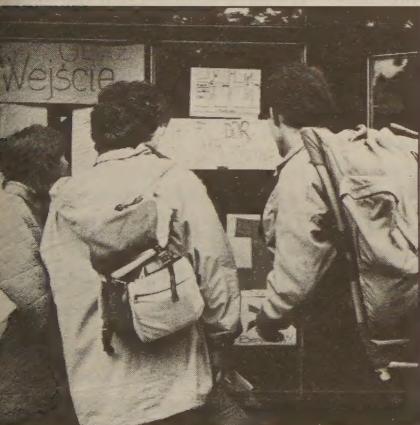
Arriving in the Pécs railway station.

"Only towards the end did we realize that our guests were truly witnesses to Christ. In my village, we would like to have kept them with us longer, like the disciples of Emmaus who said to Christ, «Stay with us; evening is coming and the day is far spent.»" In another village, the church bells were rung specially for the occasion, and so a coach which had got lost in the night was able to find its way.

The astonishment was shared by those who were welcomed: "I realized that welcoming strangers is the sign that we are able to welcome Christ. The fact of having seen so many families lovingly welcome strangers impels me to open myself to others. Welcoming is a sign of God's love." There was not only astonishment, but also joy at seeing something so essential lived out before one's eyes.

For example, a Hungarian explained the particular importance of the presence of so many young adults from other Eastern European countries: "We have lived for such a long time in mistrust towards one another, in fear at being obliged one day to have to intervene militarily to put down a popular movement in a neighboring country, with the feeling that we are keeping an eye on one another. The fact of welcoming so many Polish people, for example, is a real sign that trust is possible and that it is stronger than all the fears and misunderstandings."

In this present situation of a constantly evolving Central Europe, the words of Pope John XXIII at the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, referred to several times by Brother Roger during his meditations, take on great intensity: "We shall not put history on trial; we shall not try to find out who was wrong and who was right; we shall only say: let us be reconciled!"



The participants from Eastern and Western Europe.

The Lutheran, Catholic and Reformed bishops took part in the prayer in Budapest.



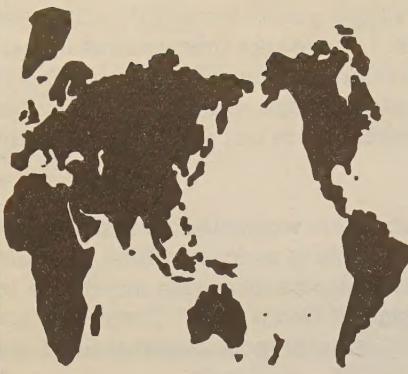
As during every European meeting, the common prayers were at the centre of each day. For most of the participants, it was the first time they experienced such a prayer, supported by meditative chanting and involving so much silence. They were astonished to discover that the road to communion with God and with others was so accessible, requiring neither a complicated preparation nor extensive resources.

The meeting was also an opportunity to share the questions raised by current changes. How can we be more daring and use to the full the new possibilities opening up in certain areas? Some were thinking about all the reorganization necessary: youth movements, religious communities, institutes of theological formation. Others emphasized that the most important thing was to awaken a radical choice for Christ and the Gospel. "The first priority," said the bishop of Pécs, "is to help a young Church to grow, a Church which, like the first Christian communities, wishes to be like Christ, and whose members are animated by the tireless passion for encounter with all people."

Quickly, in the dynamic of the meeting, concrete projects were formed: in several parishes, families that offered hospitality are meeting to continue to reflect on these questions. Elsewhere a weekly prayer has begun. An icon of the cross is going from village to village on pilgrimage, welcomed by different people every week.

The announcement of the next European meeting in Poland, in Wroclaw, was greeted by a thunder of applause. It opens up a wonderful perspective of continuing together a pilgrimage of trust. Even if there will even be more people taking part, the hospitality will certainly be just as generous. ■

PÉCS



Listening to the CONTINENTS

USA

Women and men of the Beatitudes

A letter from Taizé brothers living in New York: "Milwaukee, a city of a million inhabitants situated on Lake Michigan. On arriving, you pass through industrial and residential neighborhoods, the downtown area with its few skyscrapers, until at last you reach the "inner city", a black neighborhood feared and misunderstood by most of the city's population. The small single houses built at the beginning of the century, made of bricks or painted wood, seem hospitable and joyful. When you look closer, however, you see the results of a fire here, broken stairways there. Some of the houses are abandoned, with pieces of wood nailed over doorways and windows. Over the past thirty years, the original residents of the area (Germans, Irish, Italians) left, and Blacks and Hispanics took their place. The "inner city" has two faces. During the daytime, the streets are filled with the noise of children playing, with their mothers looking on. At night, men come and go; all kinds of illegal activity take place: drugs and whatever else can be imagined.

We arrived at St Gall parish, a tiny light in the midst of these confused streets. With the support of the archbishop of Milwaukee, and after weeks of visits and meetings throughout the United States—California, New York, Pennsylvania, Nebraska—the pilgrimage of trust would lead us to something new: ten weeks spent sharing in the life of this parish with, in the middle, a weekend of sharing and celebration. St Gall is a poor parish, with one priest and a few parishioners, mostly women, who run everything. For the past twelve years, four times a week, an evening meal has been served to 200 persons: poor people, women and men trying to survive, who work, who receive welfare or a Social Security check, but who are not able to make ends meet. Most of them are not members of the church, but without realizing it, they gradually become a part of the life of the parish. A solidarity is built up starting from very little.

St Gall also has organized a "learning center". In this country, illiteracy is more widespread than one imagines, and is a formidable obstacle to finding work. Here, adults come to learn to read and write. Volunteer teachers from other parishes work with them. Little by little walls fall down; reciprocal trust becomes possible.

During these ten weeks, three times each day, we gathered in the church for prayer. We wondered how our meditative style of prayer would be accepted by people with very different traditions and customs. Because of the growing trust, a way forward became visible. One day, a woman who came to the prayer every evening said, "This peaceful prayer, and the silence, helps me to understand that God looks at me with love, and only love. When I'm tired, or angry, I can see God's face in those I take care of, because of the way God looks at me."

At Pentecost, we celebrated all we had discovered together. The parish invited people from other churches and neighborhoods. Some came from cities far away. On Friday evening, in another church nearby, a prayer around the Cross was held. On Saturday morning, we met in the local Lutheran church for prayer and a Bible sharing on the Beatitudes. In the afternoon, at St Gall, the choirs of the inner-city parishes helped us to enter into the prayer of praise so important to African Americans; two parishioners, a young man and the mother of a family, spoke to us of the Beatitudes. The weekend concluded with a festive meal in the place where, every evening, we had served the poor, and a beautiful prayer of Resurrection and of the Holy Spirit. Without knowing it and without many resources, this parish is already living out the deepest reality of the Church, a place of communion for all. "The parish is the place of solidarity," one of the women told us. We saw with our own eyes women and men of the Beatitudes." ■

"After thinking about all these problems we concluded that the important thing was to start to do something as best we could. And we told ourselves: «We must accept to do something without earning anything, to show that we truly love these children. That is how we were led to open a small school, beginning with the children we knew, who live in our neighbourhood and who are not able to attend school. We visited their parents and we told them that they could, if they wished, send their children to our school. The parish furnished notebooks and pencils, which we distributed to the children. A young man offered us the use of part of his house which we extended with arbors covered with coconut leaves. A blackboard was all we added: no desks or tables. We had fifteen children.

"The first year went very well and beginning the second year, there were so many requests that we had to increase the enrollment and work in three shifts: a first group worked in the morning, a second in the afternoon and a third in the evening. On our side too, we divided up the work: each of us came when we could, a few every day. In setting up this school we had very few resources. The teachers were all high school or college students who were still going to school themselves. We did all we could, however, to make it a school like all the others. After three years, we sent the first pupils to the examination for a diploma. They did very well; one of them received the second highest score for the capital city! As a result, we were given a government authorization and could function officially. "We have so often had the experience that, with few resources, many things can be done in Haiti, but now I understand too that such experiences must be shared with others, and also supported so that they can blossom into a true work of education."

Haiti

Making the earth fit to live in

"I would like to share my experience as a volunteer teacher for five years in a school for poor children in Haiti. In this country 80% of the population is illiterate, and the rate of unemployment is also very high, around 80%. It is necessary to begin at the very beginning: the basic problem of Haiti is illiteracy. Because so few people can read and write, it is impossible really to begin anything in other areas. In Haiti, schooling is not free. The greatest difficulty is at the beginning of each school year, because all the required supplies must be bought—books, uniforms, etc. This costs at least 150 to 200 US dollars. Most Haitian families do not even earn 200 dollars a year. That is why most children cannot go to school. It is not due to their parents' lack of interest but because they really are not able to send their children to school.

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